

REMARKS

Applicants gratefully acknowledge the indication of allowable subject matter in Claim 8 of the application.

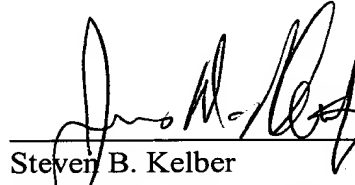
Claim 8 and 28 have been cancelled. Claims 2, 4-7, 9-13, 19, 21-23, 25-27 and 29-36 remain pending, and new Claims 37-39 have been added. Support for Claims 37 and 39 can be found at page 5, lines 15-17 of the specification. Support for Claim 38 can be found at page 2, lines 17-19 of the specification.

Independent Claims 21 and 36 have been amended to recite that the sealing band is comprised of fiberglass as previously recited in Claim 8. Accordingly, Claims 21 and 36 define patentable subject matter. The other pending claims depending from Claims 21 or 36 also define patentable subject matter for at least this reason. Withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

In light of the above, Applicants submit that this application is now in condition for allowance and therefore request favorable consideration. If any issues remain which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephonic interview, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact Applicants' counsel, James M. Heintz at (202) 861-4167.

Respectfully submitted,

PIPER RUDNICK LLP

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steven B. Kelber", is written over a horizontal line.

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